

The Status Report

January 2009 | Volume 5, Issue 7

Charles F. Hurley Building, 19 Staniford St., 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Web: www.mass.gov/women Phone: 617-626-6520 E-Mail: mcsw@state.ma.us



MCSW Scores Victories at End of 185th Legislative Session



At the conclusion of the Massachusetts Legislature's formal session the MCSW reported on some important victories and advances on its legislative priorities. During the informal session, the MCSW continued to advocate for several pieces of legislation. We are pleased to announce two legislative victories.

S2884 An Act Establishing the Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women was signed by Governor Patrick on January 10th. This bill creates a permanent Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women that is charged with conducting an ongoing study of matters concerning women on the Cape and Islands, advising local and state officials on their findings and recommending solutions. For information on how you can apply to become a member of this Commission please see Page 4.

H1617 An Act Relative to Caregiver Medical and Educational Consent allows caregivers, such as grandparents or a kinship care provider, to consent to medical treatment and educational decisions on behalf of the child that is in their care. The legislation was signed by Governor Patrick on January 14th. For more information on the importance of this bill and the impact it will have on families of the Commonwealth please see Page 3 of this newsletter.

In the upcoming session, the MCSW will continue to support legislation that advances the status of women in the Commonwealth. Pay equity remains a MCSW priority issue and Commissioners and staff look forward to working with legislative sponsors and members of the Massachusetts Coalition for Women's Wage Equality. In addition, the MCSW has identified domestic violence prevention and teen pregnancy prevention as areas of interest and focus.

The MCSW encourages advocacy efforts on behalf of its priorities, and would like to thank those who contributed with phone calls, emails, time and testimony on the road to these successes. For more information or for a complete listing of the MCSW's endorsed legislation please contact Jill Ashton at jill.ashton@state.ma.us or 617-626-6520.



New Commissioners Stephanie Everett, Marisa DeFranco, Elizabeth Hart, Joanne Fitzgerald McCrea and Chris Chanyasulkit joined the MCSW in January. See page 4 for more on our newest Commissioners.

Inside This Issue

Executive Director Corner	2
Grandparents in the Commonwealth	3
Unsung Heroines Nominations Sought	3
Commonwealth Commissions Update	4
Welcome to New Commissioners	4
Upcoming Events	5

Executive Director Corner

What a decade it has been! 2009 marks the 10 Year Anniversary of the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and the call to action rings as loudly today as it did when the founding delegation returned from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing pledge to raise international consciousness and pursue an action platform advancing the social, economic, and legal rights of women continues in the Commonwealth today. Translating these ambitious goals into legislative actions and increasing women's voice in the policy cycle has been the work of the MCSW this past decade. Throughout the next few months, we will be cataloging MCSW achievements. This newsletter highlights the events of January.



Kira Dunn, Executive Director

Driving home from Hyannis last week after attending the Cape & Islands Regional Council meeting I got to thinking about how profound it is that a group of women have devoted so much time and energy into this council. They are all volunteers and because they care about their community, they meet regularly, leave work early, leave kids to make their own dinner that night, take on outreach and educational campaigns, speak with legislators, and have even dropped everything when notified they had one day to prepare and testify at the State House in support of legislation that could transform their council into a commission.

These women are all community change agents who didn't wait for a special pin to be made or a legislative decree to be bestowed but rather answered the Commissions call for action, started meeting at a community building, identifying priority issues for women in their neighborhood and deciding the best way forward. Is this what inauguration day poet Elizabeth Alexander referred to when she said "figuring it out at the kitchen table"? Solution building begins in the community around tables like the one at the Hyannis Cape and Islands Community Action Committee office. Real work happening in real neighborhoods, by real activists brings real change. When concerned citizens such as the members of the Cape & Islands are paired with the MCSW Commissioners, a real current can be felt that is all about recommitting to the vision articulated a decade ago.

And these change agents are not working alone. In January, the Commission welcomed 8 new Commissioners, representing a wide range of hometowns, ages, ethnic and cultural heritage, job industries and areas of interest. Their diversity is our strength. An inclusive Commission leverages our unique talents, skills and perspectives towards increased organizational capacity, cultural competency and new opportunities to pursue our goals. Four current Commissioners were honored with re-appointments providing continuity, stability and mentorship for new Members.

President Obama's inaugural pledge to increase transparency and integrity in government and to identify ways for government to work better is a bipartisan message that resonates with every public agency across the nation. Mindful of these standards, the Commission has met with our Appointing Authorities, holds open our doors to all of our meetings and are already working to streamline our internal office processes so that our maximum energy and attention can be devoted to our policy agenda. As the Commissions Executive Director, I am honored to have the opportunity to join the Commissioners and all of you in working "towards fundamental freedoms, basic human rights and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives".



President Obama signs the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act on January 29, 2009!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kira Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kira" and the last name "Dunn" clearly distinguishable.

Kira Dunn, Executive Director

p.s. As we go to press today, President Obama has signed his first bill, making equal pay and working women's rights in America a priority.

MCSW is Now Seeking Nominations for 6th Annual Unsung Heroines Event

*They don't make the news...
they make the difference.*



On May 13th at the 6th Annual Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts event, the MCSW will honor 100 Unsung Heroines from communities across the Commonwealth. The Commission is now accepting applications for consideration and will do so until February 27th.

"We are looking for women who don't make the news, they make a difference." says Greer Tan Swiston, MCSW Chair. "Unsung Heroines are women who make our neighborhoods, cities and towns better places to live and to work. They are mentors, volunteers and innovators who do what needs to be done without expectations of recognition or gratitude. These women are the glue that keeps a community together and every community has them. With our Unsung Heroine Event, we want to honor these amazing women and say 'Thank you for all you do!'"

MCSW is seeking extraordinary women of all ages, all economic, political and ethnic backgrounds. Any individual may nominate one or more Massachusetts' women to be considered for selection as an Unsung Heroine of 2009. Nomination forms are available for download on the MCSW's website at www.mass.gov/women.

A selection committee will review all nominations and the 2009 Unsung Heroine honorees will be contacted and invited to attend a ceremony in their honor at the Massachusetts State House on May 13th. For more information please contact the MCSW at 617-626-6520 or mcsw@state.ma.us

A Win for Grandparents Across the Commonwealth

The Commission is excited to report that at the end of the 2008 legislative session *H4718 An Act Relative to Caregiver Medical and Educational Consent* has been signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick. This legislation was sponsored by a long-time advocate for grandfamilies, Representative John Lepper, of the Second Bristol District, who after thirteen years in the House of Representatives has recently retired.

There are 67,781 children living in grandparent-headed households, which is 4.5% of all children in Massachusetts. This Act will allow a caregiver, such as a grandparent or kinship care provider, to consent to medical treatment and educational decisions on behalf of the child that is in their care. Rights include, but are not limited to, giving consent to medical decisions such as routine medical treatments like check ups and dental visits, and education decisions such as school disciplinary measures, educational records and participation in school activities.

The Commission endorsed this legislation beginning the spring of 2005 and has strongly supported its progress since that time. The Commission first learned of the challenges facing grandparents responsible for raising their grandchildren during the May 2004 MCSW public hearing held in Danvers. A concerned grandmother testified on her struggle as an older woman raising her grandchildren. She described concerns including lack of available childcare. She urged the Commission to encourage the development of more support groups, resources, agencies and funding to help alleviate some of the pressure for all of the grandparents in the same predicament.

There have also been Commissioners who were touched by this issue personally. They too are grandmothers and can identify to the other 27,915 Massachusetts grandparents who reported that they were responsible for their grandchildren living with them. The Commission recognized that this issue should receive more attention and offered its full support.

In addition, the MCSW has previously supported *H1617 An Act Establishing the Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren's Commission* that was ultimately included in *An Act Protecting Children in the Care of the Commonwealth*, which was signed into law in July 2008. This Act created a Commission that will assess the challenges associated with grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and will advise Legislators on how to assist these families.

For additional resources please visit the Grandfamilies State Law and Policy Resource Center Internet Links/Resources for Additional Information Website at <http://www.grandfamilies.org/index.cfm?page=resourcelinks>.

MCSW Welcomes 8 New Commissioners and Celebrates 4 Reappointments



Commissioners Fitzgerald McCrea, DeFranco, Hart, and Chanyasulkit during the January 21st swearing-in ceremony.

Eight new commissioners have joined the MCSW this month. Four current Commissioners received re-appointment to new terms. The Commissioners were appointed by Governor Deval Patrick, former Speaker of the House Salvatore DiMasi, Senate President Therese Murray and the Caucus of Women Legislators.

Governor Deval Patrick has appointed Chris Chanyasulkit of Brookline to serve a two year term.

Senate President Murray has re-appointed Linda Cavaoli of Worcester to another three year term. In addition, she has named Joanne Fitzgerald McCrea of Salem to a one year term, Elizabeth Hart of Malden to a two year term and Marisa A. DeFranco of Middleton to serve a three year term.

Speaker DiMasi has appointed Stacy Dixon of Randolph and re-appointed Donna Finneran of Mattapan both to serve three year terms.

The Caucus of Women Legislators has re-appointed Angela Menino of Hyde Park to another three year term. Also appointed were Lucy Hartry of Florence and Ruth Nemzoff of West Newton to each serve one year terms, and Stephanie Everett of Mattapan to a two year term.

"The strength of our Commission continues to grow with these new appointments," said MCSW Chair Greer Swiston. "These dedicated and talented appointees will enhance this Commissions' ability to focus on our ambitious agenda for 2009 addressing pay equity, domestic violence and teen pregnancy prevention."

Commission Corner: Checking in with Commissions Across the Commonwealth

Brookline County Commission on the Status of Women

The Brookline Commission for Women is sponsoring its **4th Annual Dress for Success Winter Coat and Clothing Drive** on Friday, January 30th from 11a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday, January 31st from 8 a.m. to 11a.m. at the Brookline Public Safety Headquarters at 350 Washington Street in the Community Room. Dress for Success is a not-for-profit organization that offers services to help women enter the workforce and stay employed. Each Dress for Success client receives one suit when she has a job interview and a week's worth of separates when she gets the job. This winter, the program is in particular need of winter coats. Additionally, gloves, scarves, shoes, handbags, and briefcases are also in high demand. Business attire (suits, slacks, jackets, etc.) are also being accepted and should be appropriate for the workplace. If possible, please bring clean, ready-to-wear items. Any clothing not accepted by the Dress for Success program will be donated to the Women's Lunch Place. If you have any questions, please contact BCW@town.brookline.ma.us.

Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

The MCSW is now accepting applications for the newly established Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women (CCICSW). The CCICSW was enacted by law and established this month to advance Cape Code women toward full equality and to promote rights and opportunities for all women. The CCICSW will be comprised of 13 women who have had prior experience working towards the improvement of the status of women. Commissioners will be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, sexual orientation, and socio-economic backgrounds from throughout Cape Cod & the Islands.

The Commission's duties include: studying, reviewing and reporting on the status of women on Cape Cod & the Islands; promoting and facilitating collaboration among local women's organizations; recommending policies that benefit women to agencies, officers of the state, and local government; and holding fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary. The Commission will meet at least 6 times a year, at the members' discretion.

Applications are available online at www.mass.gov/women, by emailing a request to mcsw@state.ma.us or calling 617-626-6520. **To be considered for appointment, please submit a completed application form to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women, Attn: Cape Cod Commission Applications, 19 Staniford St., 6th Floor Boston, MA 02114 or by email to mcsw@state.ma.us.** Please remember that information you provide is public and cannot be kept private or confidential. Applications will be accepted until **March 30th**.

Take Action. Get Educated. Get Involved.

If you are interested in becoming more involved in organizations focusing on women's issues across the Commonwealth you can start by attending any one of the number of events and meetings taking place in the coming weeks.

January is STALKING AWARENESS MONTH. Please visit www.stalkingawarenessmonth.org for more information.

Friday, February 6 (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.): National Wear Red Day

Location: Offices and Organizations Nationwide

Details: Support the fight against heart disease in women by wearing **red**. It's a simple, powerful way to raise awareness about heart disease and stroke. Join together with thousands of women and men, companies and organizations in cities across America to help the American Heart Association support ongoing research and education about women and heart disease. At participating organizations, employees are encouraged to wear red (and/or dress down if your company allows) and donate \$5 to the American Heart Association. In turn, for their support, each employee will receive a red dress sticker or pin to wear, along with information about how they might adopt a healthy lifestyle. For more information on how you and your organization can participate visit www.goredforwomen.org/national_wear_red_day.aspx.

Friday, March 6 (7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.): International Women's Day Breakfast - Who Owns Your Food & Water: Globally & Locally

Location: Linda K. Paresky Conference Center, Simmons College (300 The Fenway, Boston)

Details: This year, the Boston International Women's Day Breakfast will examine the impact of corporate ownership of food and water on women, their families and their communities – locally and globally. Gather with more than 100 women from the Boston-area for an engaging morning of presenters as they address the concerns, challenges and effects of this issue. Please RSVP your attendance to Diane Hammer at diane.hammer@simmons.edu.

Friday, March 20 (7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.): Massachusetts Health Council Women's Health Forum - *Getting Healthy, Staying Healthy: Knowledge is Everything*

Location: Marriott Copley Place (110 Huntington Avenue, Boston)

Details: This educational conference is designed to improve the health of the attendees, their friends, families and associates and give women a starting point in leading healthier, happier, more productive lives. Women from all walks of life should attend to gain an insight on taking better care of themselves; from reducing stress in one's everyday life to preventing some of the most common and serious illnesses that effect women. Tickets are \$85 for MCH members and \$95 for non-members. Please visit www.mahealthcouncil.org for more information.

March 27-29: Female Faces of War Conference

Location: Battleship Cove (5 Water Street, Fall River)

Details: A Friday night screening of *Lioness* with an exclusive introduction and discussion with filmmaker Daria Sommers will be followed by an overnight aboard the ship. Saturday's conference will consist of multiple speakers, including a keynote address by Brigadier General Wilma Vaught (Ret.), president of the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial in Washington, DC. Price for the full two-day program and overnight is \$80; price of the Friday evening movie only \$10; Friday evening movie, dinner, and reception \$45; and the Saturday program is only \$35. The Conference is presented by The YWCAs of Greater Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts along with Women Protecting US exhibit at the USS *Massachusetts*. For more information and to register, contact Paula Hague 508-678-1100, Ext. 101.

Sunday, April 5 (10:00 a.m.): Boston Area Rape Crisis Center Fourth Annual Walk for Change

Location: Canal Park at CambridgeSide Galleria (Cambridge)

Details: This event is held to both kick off Sexual Assault Awareness Month and to raise much needed funds for the free services that BARCC offers to sexual assault victims, families and the community. Registration begins at 10:00 a.m. and the Walk begins at 11 a.m. The route is a 5k loop around the Charles River. The BARCC's goal this year is 1,000 walkers and \$100,000 raised! Walkers can register online at www.firstgiving.com/barcc or they can visit (www.barcc.org) for paper registration materials. Registration is \$20 to pre-register and \$30 day-of.

For even more upcoming events please visit our online calendar at www.mass.gov/women/calendar/upcoming.htm.

Do you have an event you would like to see on this list in an upcoming issue of The Status Report? E-mail the details to Program Coordinator Kim Sebastiao at Kimberly.Sebastiao@state.ma.us and we will do our best to include your event in our next issue and/or on the MCSW's website calendar.

Commission Officers & Members

Greer Tan Swiston, Chair, Newton
Pam Malumphy, Vice Chair, Pittsfield
Elizabeth H. Houlihan, Treasurer, Falmouth
Donna Finneran, Secretary, Mattapan

Ruth Bramson, Dover
Linda Cavaoli, Worcester
Chris Chanyasulkit, Brookline
Helen Corbett, Middleton
Marisa DeFranco, Middleton
Deborah DiMasi, Boston
Stacy Dixon, Randolph
Stephanie Everett, Mattapan
Marianne Fleckner, Westford
Catherine Greene, Brighton
Elizabeth Hart, Malden
Lucy Hartry, Florence
Joanne Fitzgerald McCrea, Salem
Angela Menino, Hyde Park
Ruth Nemzoff, West Newton

Commission Staff

Kira Dunn, Executive Director
Jill Ashton, Outreach Coordinator
Kim Sebastiao, Program Coordinator
Darlene Kelter, Administrative Assistant

Commission Interns & Volunteers

Rebekah Fiehn, *UMASS-Boston: Program for Women
in Politics & Public Policy*
Sarah Lamm, *Northeastern University*
Eglantina Malaj, *Salem State College*
Priscilla Nyahwa, *UMASS-Boston*
Jessica Pereira, *Fitchburg State College*
Nelly Rocha, *Volunteer*



19 Staniford St., 6th FL
Boston, MA 02114

Phone:

617.626.6520

Fax:

617.626.6530

E-Mail:

mcsw@state.ma.us

Web site:

www.mass.gov/women

**Do you have questions or comments about this
newsletter? If so, please contact**

MCSW@state.ma.us

Member of the

